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FOR SA/PAB, SA/PPD (LSCENSNY), SA/RA, INR/R/MR,
AND PASS TO USAID FOR ANE/ASIA/SA/B (WJOHNSON)

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SUBJECT: Media Reaction: Prophet's Cartoon, Iran Nuclear
Issue;Dhaka

Summary: "The Daily Star" says the publication of the prophet's cartoon is disgraceful and despicable journalism at its worst and reaffirms that nobody has the right to mock the prophet of any great religion. It says Muslims must protest but not violently.

On Iran nuclear issue, "The Daily Star" says Iranian President Ahmedinejad's threat to revise Iran's policy, if it considers the action of the US and the West an attempt to violate the rights of the Iranian people, must be seen in the context of the West's stand on the nuclear issue globally, which betrays a degree of double standards.

Prophet's Cartoon

"Cartoons of holy Prophet: Muslims Must Protest, But Not Violently"

Independent English language "The Daily Star" editorially comments (02/12/06):

We condemn in unequivocal terms the cartoons of Prophet Muhammad that a Danish newspaper published, and some other newspapers in Europe reprinted. This is disgraceful and despicable journalism at its worst. We firmly believe that nobody has the right to mock the prophet of any great religion.

We thought that the paper would realize its mistake and come up with an unconditional apology. But nothing of the sort has happened so far, rather it is still trying to defend itself on the pretext of press freedom. Unfortunately, it has also found some advocates of its attempt to undermine Islam and its prophet in a most objectionable manner. We feel that the whole exercise aims at provoking Muslims into violent action. What other motive could there be behind humiliating the founder of a major religion with more than a billion followers today? The newspaper has failed to differentiate between press freedom and indecent activities that hurt others. The plea that the founders of other religions have also been ridiculed by some elements in the developed world is not relevant here, because the whole thing revolves around the level of sensitivity that the aggrieved have towards the issue. The injudicious act of maligning a prophet, whose greatness has never been questioned even by western scholars and whose position in world history was determined long ago as a liberator of the oppressed, should be condemned by all. Muslims as a matter of belief respect the prophets of other religions and so there is no question of denigrating the prophets.

The cartoons have regrettably been reprinted by the press of some other European countries as well, which has further compounded the enormity of the highly irresponsible and boorish act. They have hurt the feelings of millions of Muslims across the globe, and that's reason enough for the newspapers concerned to apologize and refrain from such malicious and unwarranted activities in future.

Iran Nuclear Issue

"Iran's Threat To Pull Out of NPT: Diplomacy Must Be Given A Chance"

Independent English "The Daily Star" editorially comments (02/13/06):

The on going nuclear stand off may have compelled the Iranian president to threaten pulling out of the NPT. But Ahmedinejad's threat to revise Iran's policy, if it considers the action of the US and the West an attempt to violate the rights of the Iranian people, must be seen in

the context of the West's stand on nuclear issue globally, which betrays a degree of double standards. The West may have pushed Iran just too hard to compel it into actions that will be precipitattative which, among other things, may cause the NPT to lose its clout while leaving the US and the West ruing the inefficacy of their motivated and one-eyed policy on nuclear issue that demonstrates a lack of consistency in their effort to halt the global proliferation of nuclear weapons. The fallout of reporting Iran to the Security Council we have already witnessed in Iran's making its nuclear installations a 'no go area' for the IAEA inspectors, and also expressing their intention to start uranium enrichment. We believe that Iran has all the right to go for peaceful use of nuclear energy. However, she is a member of the NPT which also obligates a member state to subject itself to the conditions laid down by the regime. But Iran has repeatedly stated that her renewed nuclear program is not for weaponisation but only for energy production. For all too long the efforts of the US and the West have been concentrated on fulfilling but one aspect of the NPT, proliferation. There seems to be no efforts to suggest that the world is moving towards total elimination of nuclear weapons. If anything, newer entrants have not only been accepted into the fold of the 'nuclear Brahmins,' the Americans are even planning to undertake programs of civil-nuclear cooperation, which some characterize as ambitious. There is much at stake, most of all world peace, in this issue. Thus, what is needed is not rhetoric or threat of military action but phlegmatic diplomacy that would take into account the interest of all the parties.

Chammas